

BARGAIN BOOK COMPANY (1989–1999)

An Independent Remainder and Reprint Bookseller Founded by Nigel Robertson

Including the Early Bookworm Partnership (1989–1992) and Bargain Book Company (London) Ltd (1995–1999)

This first edition has been prepared without photographs or illustrations. A revised edition may be produced in the future if additional material becomes available.

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(also known as Nigel Robertson)

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About this document

This document has been prepared by Nigel Adrian Robertson to preserve the history of the bookselling businesses that traded under the names **Bookworm**, **Bargain Book Company**, and **Bargain Book Company (London) Ltd** between 1989 and 1999.

It is intended as a factual historical record based upon the author's personal knowledge, surviving company information and recollection of the business.

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1. Introduction

This document records the history of an independent **remainder and reprint bookselling business** founded and operated by **Nigel Robertson (Nigel Adrian Robertson)** in the United Kingdom between 1989 and 1999.

The business began in 1989 under the trading name **Bookworm**, initially operating as a self-employed direct-sales bookselling venture in partnership. It subsequently developed into a network of temporary retail bookshops trading under the name **Bargain Book Company**, before becoming incorporated as **Bargain Book Company (London) Ltd** in 1995.

The business specialised in the sale of **remainder books, reprint books and discounted books**, later expanding into a wider range of complementary retail products.

Although relatively small in size, the business operated temporary licensed and leased retail premises in several towns across southern England and, at its peak, employed approximately ten permanent and regular staff.

In addition to managing the bookselling operation, Nigel Robertson personally organised and created the shop fits for each temporary retail outlet. This involved planning the layout and preparation of new premises and arranging temporary teams of up to approximately fifteen people for 1 or 2 days during the opening and closure of individual retail locations.

2. Bookworm Partnership Period (1989–1992)

1989

The business began in 1989 under the trading name **Bookworm**.

Operating in partnership, the business purchased remainder and reprint books for resale, initially selling directly from the back of a vehicle to employees on industrial estates and to nursing homes.

This direct-sales approach provided valuable experience of the discount book market before moving into retail premises.

Late 1989 – Bridge Street, Guildford

Towards the end of 1989, the business rented a small shop in Bridge Street, Guildford, for approximately six weeks.

The experiment proved that temporary retail premises offered greater commercial opportunities than direct sales and became the foundation of the business model that followed.

During this transition period, the business identity evolved from the original Bookworm trading name towards Bargain Book Company.

1990

56 North Street, Guildford

Temporary retail bookshop.

1991

Market Street, Guildford

Temporary retail bookshop trading as **Bargain Book Company**.

1992

White Lion Walk, Guildford

Temporary retail bookshop trading as **Bargain Book Company**.

The partnership ended at the end of 1992.

3. Bargain Book Company (1990–1995)

As the retail business developed, it adopted the trading name **Bargain Book Company**.

Following the end of the partnership, Nigel Robertson continued operating the business independently.

The business concentrated on selling remainder and reprint books from temporary licensed or leased retail premises, allowing expansion into different towns while avoiding long-term lease commitments.

Temporary retail premises included:

1993

Regent Street, Swindon

1994

Newbury High Street

1994–1995

St Ann's Road, Harrow on the Hill

4. Bargain Book Company (London) Ltd (1995–1999)

Bargain Book Company (London) Ltd was incorporated on **13 October 1995**.

Company Number:

03113807

The incorporated company continued trading under the Bargain Book Company name and continued the established temporary retail shop model. At its peak, approximately ten people were employed.

The principal registered business address during the trading period was:

135A Brackenbury Road

London W6 0BQ

The company continued operating temporary retail premises while expanding its product range.

5. Temporary Retail Shop Locations

The business operated temporary licensed or leased retail premises at the following locations.

Guildford

Late 1989 – Bridge Street

1990 – 56 North Street

1991 – Market Street

1992 – White Lion Walk

Swindon

1993 – Regent Street

Harrow on the Hill

1994–1995 – St Ann's Road

Newbury

1994 – High Street

Slough

1995–1996 – Outside Queensmere Shopping Centre

Basingstoke

1995–1997 – The Walks Shopping Centre, Mayfair House

1998 – Wote Street

6. Products and Business Development

Books remained the core of the business throughout its trading history.

The range included:

- Fiction books
- Non-fiction books
- Reference books
- Hardback books
- Paperback books
- Remainder books
- Reprint books
- Half-price books
- Discounted books

- Computer books

As the business developed, additional product lines were introduced to complement the core bookselling operation.

These included:

- Compact discs (from 1994)
- Posters
- Stationery
- Greeting cards
- Gift wrap
- Framed pictures
- Calendars

In 1996, the business also imported a small range of shareware computer games supplied on 3½-inch floppy disks to complement its successful computer book department.

The wider product range increased customer appeal and reflected the changing retail environment of the mid-1990s.

7. Business Model

The Bargain Book Company specialised in purchasing remainder books, reprint books and discounted stock before selling directly to the public through temporary licensed or leased retail premises.

This flexible retail model enabled the business to trade in different locations, particularly during busy seasonal periods, while avoiding the costs associated with permanent high-street premises.

The temporary retail model required not only stock management and sales operations, but also the rapid preparation and closure of retail premises. Shop layouts, fittings and displays were organised for each new location, with temporary teams brought in when required to assist with shop openings and closures.

8. Challenges and Closure

Although the business enjoyed periods of commercial success, a number of factors eventually contributed to its closure.

These included:

- difficulty obtaining direct supply from book publishers;
- reliance on wholesalers, reducing profit margins;

- high prime high-street rents;
- increasing administrative requirements placed upon small limited companies;
- inadequate accounting and bookkeeping support.

Following several years of trading, Bargain Book Company (London) Ltd ceased operations and was subsequently dissolved.

9. Historical Summary

Between 1989 and 1999, Nigel Robertson established and developed an independent remainder and reprint bookselling business that evolved from direct sales into a network of temporary retail bookshops.

Operating under the names **Bookworm**, **Bargain Book Company**, and later **Bargain Book Company (London) Ltd**, the business formed part of the wider UK bargain books trade of the late twentieth century.

The business demonstrated how small independent retailers could use temporary retail premises to bring discounted books and related products directly to the public across several towns in southern England.

This document has been prepared to preserve that history for future researchers, local historians and anyone interested in the independent bookselling trade of the 1990s.

Appendix A

Companies House Information

Company Name:

Bargain Book Company (London) Ltd

Company Number:

03113807

Date of Incorporation:

13 October 1995

Company Type:

Private Limited Company

Status:

Dissolved

Recorded Officers:

Nigel Adrian Robertson – Director and Company Secretary

Daphne Elizabeth Robertson – Director

Registered Office (recorded during trading history):

135A Brackenbury Road

London W6 0BQ

Source: Companies House public records.

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First edition
